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Bandana Days

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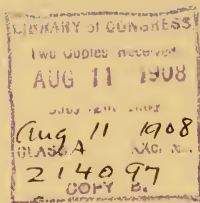
JOSEPHINE MERWIN COOK



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*These little verses
are lovingly dedicated to
my Aunt, Julia S. Merwin.*



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“SAMBO’S AMBITIONS.”

As I sets out do’, a sunnin’,
I heah’s de yaller bees a hummin’,
An’ a dusky drowsy, feelin’
Creeps eroun’ me ev’ywhar:

An’ ’tis pleasan’ des a sittin’,
I kin watch de birds go flittin’,
While mah Mandy brings her washin’,
Jes outside de kitchen do’.

’Tis er happy worl’ we lib in,
Des a dance an’ song at night,
Ter de plink, plunk o’ de banjo,
Fer ’tis den a merry sight.

An’ mah Mandy is a treasure,
Fer she is so kine an’ true;
She des lub’s ter set, an’ watch me,
Restin’ neaf de sky so blue.

"WHEN LUCINDY SINGS."

When Lucindy sings,
It's lak de lark;
Whose note rings
Up in de tree-tops,
An' cl'ar in de sky,
An' her voice is lak
The th'ush, waitin' fo' it's mate.
Down in de sedge,
Wid its brown edge.

An' mah heart is light,
When I ketches de sight,
Of mah Cindy dere;
Fo' she sings as she come,
Wid hair all ablown.
De whippo'will's note
Seem to stick in his tho'at,
When mah Cindy sings;
Kase he shamed o' hisse'f,

An' goes hidin' away,
At de grey dawn o' day,
Fer he heard Cindy sing.

An', Cindy, mah dear,
I'll meet yo' ne'er fear;
Den we'll sing altogedder,
In rain an' fair wedder,
An' de birds will be quiet,
'An' cease all dere riot;
When mah Lucindy sings.

“RASTUS AND HIS MULE.”

Pile de back-log on de fire,
Fix ev’y lil’ teeny chunk;
Dat’ll make de flames go higher,
Den I kin set an’ hab mah thunk;
Kase Ise moughty tired ebenin’s,
When Ise got mah plowin’ dun,
Followin’ atter dat mule, ain’ no joke;
He does ennything but hum,
He jes’ tek’s his time, I tell yo’.

An’ Ise jes dun clean wo’ out,
Tryin’ fo’ ter mek dat mule go;
I do nuffin’ else but shout,
“Git erlong dar yo’ ole Sambo;
Kase I wants ter go right home,
But dat mule don’ pay no ’tenshun,
Don’ do nuffin else but roam;
Do I tek’s de stick ter beat him,
An’ de close-line clean in two:

Nuffin seems ter faze dat jackass,
I clar I don’ kno’ whut ter do,
“But I reckon de buzzards want him,

Do I hates ter treat him so,"
"Glory me! he's done gone tearin',
Down de road, an' he so slow."
I knew that th' eat 'ud foteh him;
Now he's safe in his bed at las',
But I tole yo' I sartinly is ti'ed;
Havin' ter run so ve'y fas'.

"MAMMY'S VISION."

"Do yo' see dat banjo,
An' fiddle, hangin' dere,
Up on de ji'st so high?
Dey 'longed ter mah Amzi,
An' he played 'em afore he die,
An' I set's so ve'y lonely,
Sence he went away fum me,
An' I tell yo' I offen wonder's
What de future's gwine ter be.

All erlone in de cabin,
Oh, de nights am long an' sad;
When I git's ter studyin' bout him,
I look's on de ji'st up dar,
An' den I seem's ter see him
Settin' right dar in dat chear,
Wid his face lookin' bright an' happy;
Pickin' out on de banjo
Some lively chune, an' air;
An' den he tek up his fiddle.

An' gin's ter rosin his bow,
De light glow out fum his face;
'Pears lak he see's Hebben at las',

An' so 'tis a kin' o' a comfort
To have 'em high on de ji'st,
So I hangs 'em dar yo' see;
Den when I git's lonesome
Mah Amzi comes back ter me;
"Do I kno' 'tis only his sperrit,
Kase he's long gone over de sea."

“SPOOKS.”

When I wuz a lil' black mite,
I uster lissen out at night,
Kase de ol' grey-owl, in de sycamo' tree,
Used ter hoot, an' hoot, at me:
“Whoo', Whoo', ah, Whoo', cooks fo' yo' all.”

He uster skeer me mos' ter deaf,
Twell I foun' out who wuz wastin' his bref;
Mah mammy said, tain' nuffin', chile,
But de hoot-owl, callin' all de while:
“Whoo', Whoo', ah, Whoo', cooks fo' yo' all.”

Do Ise growed up now, I tell yo' true,
Dat same ole soun' meks me shiver clean th'oo,
When I goes down de road, in de dark, yo' kno',
I trimmel all obber, ah suahly do:
“Whoo', Whoo', ah, Whoo, cooks fo' yo' all.”

“THE DESERTED QUARTERS.”

De quarters am deserted,
Mos' all ob de folks is gone;
An' whut is lef' is nuffin'
But de rafters an' a chimney;
Here an' dere, all forlorn,
Wid er roof-tree, grim an' bare.

Oh, dose happy days in Dixie,
When de cabins all wuz filled
Wid lil' pickanninny's,
An' Daddy Joe an' Mammy Lou,
Wid Tom an' Pomp an' Dill;
All am gone, sum is dead.

An' de rafters bare, an' grim,
All dats lef' ter tell de story
Ob de fiddle an' de banjo,
Ob de revelry an' fun
Dat dey uster hab in dose times,
Atter dere days wu'k wuz dun.

So yo' axes me ter splanify,
Which 'd ruther be ter day;
Wa'll! now, Massah! dat's a question,

It 'ud be moughty hawd ter say,
An' 'twould tek a heap o' thinkin'
Fer to answer right erway.

I tell yo' 'twas moughty scrumptious,
Fo' ter kno' jes' whar ter go;
Fer all yo' food an' rayment,
'Twas ol' Marster, den yo' kno',
Dat looked out fer we uns;
Kep' us wahn fum haid ter toe.

Cose 'twas fine ter git our freedom,
Ol' Mars' Linckum looked ter dat;
But when it cum ter mekin' our libin',
I'd ruther be whar I wuz at;
Kase dey don' seem ter be no place,
Fo' us ol'-timers, dats a fac'.

An' so while 'tis nice ter be free,
An' hab our own money ter spen',
I tell yo' it's mighty hawd, sah,
When we ain' got enny ter len',
Kase deys allus somebody po'er
Dan we is, home-folks, er a frien'.

'An' so I sets a studyin'
Bout dem good days long ergo;
'Tis sad ter look at de cabins,
Wid no one settin' at de do',
Whar is yo'? Unc' Tom, Aunt Dilly?
Dat yo' ain' dar enny mo'.

Dey don' answer out ob de darkness,
Out ob de storm an' de sleet;
But I kno' whar dey is, dey's happy,
Settin' at de Gre't Marster's feet;
An' I hopes He'll call me ter go dere,
When mah joy will be complete.

"MAMMY'S AIG-BREAD."

Now, chillun, yo' all wan' ter kno'
How I mek dat corn-bread?
So, ef yo' sets an' res' erwhile,
I'll try fo' to tell yo'
I don' hab' no rece'pe, but jes mah head.

Now I scalds de meal wif' bilin' water,
Salt ter tas', wif lard yo' oughter—
Tek er small table-spoon,
Melt it in de pan,
Den po' it in, stir it quick as yo' can.

Mix sour-milk, or clabber,
Ernuff ter thin it down,
Wif er half tea-spoon of sody,
Now don' yo' frown,
Kase dat is right.

Oh, I mos' fergit:
There's two nice eggs;
Whipped a flipperty jip,
An' den yo' put in er bakin'-pan;
Nicely greased with lard.

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In a pipin' oven hot as ever yo' can,
An' brown it nice,
An' eat it hot;
An' I'll bet yo' never—
Had ennything ter ekal dat.

"LISTEN HONEY."

When the days were heavy and the times were
dark,
I heard my blessed mammy's voice,
Cheering us up, for we were weary,
With spirit's like a lark:
"Listen, Honey, she would say;
Allus darkes, jist fo' day;
Yo' kno', baby, you mus'nt fret,
Goodies times is cumin' yet;
Fo' I wouldn't tole yo' so,
Ef it wasn't true yo' kno'.

Mammy's gone up to the skies,
So unhappy have we been,
For we miss her counsel's wise,
And her bright and kindly eye;
We can almost hear her now,
Saying softly, undertone:
"Cheer up, Honey, ev'y cloud,
Silver linin', so dey say;
An' 'tis darkes', jist fo' day;
How we miss you, mammy dear.

Miss your gentle teaching hear,
And we hope to meet you there,
When we're called to go away
To the land that's bright alway.
"Come up, Honey, we will hear,
Didn' I tole yo' baby dear;
Always bright, all is light,
Come ter mammy, never fear,
And just close inside the door;
We'll be in her arms once more.

"SIGNS."

Don' yo' b'lieve in signs,
 Mah Sophie?
I does, an' so mus' yo',
When yo' spills de salt,
Don' yo' allus th'ow
It obber yo' lef' shoulder so?
Cose yo' does it, don' I kno'.

'An' when de rooster crow,
 Mah Sophie,
On de do'-step, don' yo' kno',
Dats de sign dats folks is cumin;
Den it is dat yo' go fixin',
While sum lil' lub-chune hummin';
Ah yo' wuz a lil' vixen.

Kase yo' think deys all fer yo',
 Mah Sophie.
Dat is whut yo' allus do,
An' when de stars shines bright,
Yo' gwine lissen all yo' might,
Fo' de footstep, drawin' nigh;
Dat is me; do yo' kno'? Sophie.

“I'D RUTHER IT WUZ DAYTIME.”

In de long, grey ebenin',
Jes' befo' de stars is out,
It's a moughty kin' o' lonesome
Lak when yo' has ter go 'bout,
Kase things is sort o' spooky,
An' deys shadders, hin' de trees,
A dodgin' an' a flickerin',
So's yo' heart ain' jes at ease.

Fus' yo' heahs de ol' Spook-Owl,
A-hootin' in de tree,
An' yo' almos' run ter kiver,
But de shakin' ob yo' knee
Won' let yo' move a inch;
So yo' stan's des lak' yo's friz,
Feelin' suah he gwine ter git yo',
An' yo' wish de goblin's pinch,

Ter mek suah, ob whar yo' is.
Den yo's mighty glad ter see,
De stars cum peepin' th'oo
Dere lil' winder curtains
Dat in daytime tu'ns ter blue.
An' so I laks de daylight,

Kase de Spooks am all away;
An' I'se berry much happier dan at night.

Fo' den 'tis Mister Sunshine,
Chase de stars away ter sleep,
An' de spooks, dey all go wid 'em,
Den we has no time ter weep;
Kase we mus' be up an' doin',
Fer de day is moughty short;
An' befo' I ebber kno's it,
'Twel be night-time, lak ez not.

"MAMMY'S GRATITUDE."

Come in, Miss Lucy, mah baby,
Don' stan' outside at de do',
Fer yo' mammy am anxiously waitin',
Ter hear you're step on de flo',
Kase yo' kno' I'se po' an' feeble,
An' cayn't git erbout any mo'.

Now, Honey, Lawd, bless mah soul chile,
Yo' kno's I'se thankful indeed,
Fer all de kine favors yo' bring me,
An' de good things ter eat all de while,
Kase I sartainly is po' an' needy,
Do I ain' a turnin' ter greed.

Law, chile, what's in dat baskit?
Chicken, sweet-taters, think ob dat;
Tea, 'baccy, an' bacon,
Ef yo' ain' got what I laks down pat;
Mah pipes bin empty, blessed lam',
But I won' be hongry no mo'.

Massy me! ef dar ain' a ham.
De Lawd sartain dun sent yo';

He's gwine ter gib yo' his blessin' sho',
Fer carin' fer mammy while heah;
Yes, He's gwine ter tek yo' ter Hebben,
An' mammy'll go wid yo', dear.

"MAMMY HAS HER SAY."

Now, baby, tell yo' mammy,
Whut is trubblin' yo' ter day,
Fer I kno's yo's moughty anxious,
'Bout sumpin', won' yo' say?
Kase I kno' dat I could he'p yo',
Ef yo' tell it all ter me.

I cay'nt bear ter see de sorrer
Come across yo' fair sweet face;
An' yo' come right to yo' mammy,
Fer I kno's 'tis no disgrace
Fer to lub an' trus' me darlin';
Kase yo' did it when a chile!

So I'll hol' an' rock yo' once ag'in,
As in times now pas' erwhile;
"So a Yankee-man has come
Fer ter steal mah lubbed one here?"
"I cayn't b'lieve mah seben senses;
Fo' de Lawd, I mus' shed a tear."
I ain' got no use fer him.

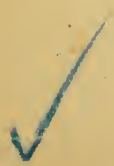
Takin' away mah baby dear,
But I s'pose I mus' gib in,
Ef yo's happy, baby-chile;
But I'se sho' gwine tell yo' Yankee
Dat ef he don' treat yo' right,
He's got ter reckon wid yo' mammy,
Dat he is, fum dis here night.



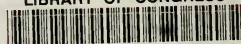




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